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Phenotypes of adult hybrids between House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

by Pedro J. Cordero

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A pair of male House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and female Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* occurred in the wild in 1988 (Cordero 1990a) and in 1989 (Cordero, unpubl.), at Prat de Llobregat, Barcelona, Spain. In 1989 a male and female juvenile hybrids were sexed according to their phenotypical characteristics (Cordero 1990b) and removed from the nest. The birds were kept in an aviary and their plumage described when they were 350 days old. Some biometrical parameters are given in Table 1.

In both specimens the bill, chin and throat were black, the bib pattern being more similar to Tree than to House Sparrow. The lores, postmandibular, subocular and postocular triangle ('mask') were also black in the male, but dark grey in the female. A small whitish stripe above the lores and a minute superior postocular spot were present in both hybrids (as in male House Sparrow) as well as a second (lower) wing bar, more conspicuous than in House but not so bright and wide as in Tree Sparrow.

With respect to sexual differences, the male resembled a large Tree Sparrow, with the centre of crown and nape greyish-brown mottled with reddish-brown (chestnut). The sides of the crown, the postocular stripe (lateral stripe) and the sides of neck were of an intense reddish-brown.

TABLE 1

Measurements of male and female hybrids and of a random sample of parental species. Culmen, maximal length of wing and tarsus (in mm) are taken according to Svensson (1984); mean \pm SD, ranges in parentheses

	n	Weight (g)	Culmen	Wing	Tarsus
House Sparrow					
males	5	29.9 \pm 1.91 (28.0–33.0)	13.4 \pm 0.21 (13.1–13.6)	78.8 \pm 1.32 (77.0–81.0)	19.5 \pm 0.14 (19.3–19.6)
females	5	28.2 \pm 0.68 (27.5–29.5)	12.5 \pm 0.19 (12.2–12.8)	77.0 \pm 1.67 (75.0–79.0)	19.3 \pm 0.42 (18.4–19.6)
Hybrids					
male	1	22.0	13.0	73.0	18.4
female	1	20.5	12.4	71.0	18.3
Tree Sparrow					
males	5	21.4 \pm 1.03 (20.4–23.3)	11.1 \pm 0.37 (10.8–11.8)	69.4 \pm 1.62 (67.0–72.0)	16.7 \pm 0.26 (16.5–17.1)
females	5	21.3 \pm 2.11 (18.8–23.8)	11.1 \pm 0.24 (10.8–11.5)	66.4 \pm 1.61 (64.0–68.0)	16.5 \pm 0.35 (16.2–17.2)

The ear coverts were greyish-white (pure white in malar region) with a black ear patch, similar but less defined than in Tree Sparrow. An extended white band on the side of the neck was also present, a feature resembling Tree Sparrow. The description of this male is almost identical to the hybrid reported by Rooke (1957) and to the hybrid male reported by Ruprecht (1967).

The female, on the contrary, was like a small male House Sparrow. The crown and nape were greyish-brown, uniform as in first-year male House Sparrow (Selander & Johnston 1967). The cheek was light grey with a grey 'Tree Sparrow-patch' very diffused and almost imperceptible (some male House Sparrows may show a similar greyish patch). The postocular stripe was an intermixture of reddish-brown and very pale brown (buff) flecks. The side of the neck was reddish-brown, paler than in male House Sparrow and sprinkled with brown. The lesser coverts were dark brown as in a female House Sparrow, in contrast to any other black-bib sparrow (shoulder is reddish-brown in first-year and older male House Sparrow, in hybrid male and in Tree Sparrow).

The observations that the female hybrid is closer to House Sparrow and the male hybrid to Tree Sparrow are supported by earlier observations on hybrids in juvenile plumage (Silver 1911, Meise 1951, Cordero 1990b).

The above descriptions suggest that most hybrids reported between House Sparrow and Tree Sparrow were males (see Ruprecht 1967; also Nichols 1919, Rooke 1957, Richardson 1957, Nyholm 1966, Tricot 1968) and the absence of reports of phenotypes like the present hybrid female may be a consequence of the difficulty of recognizing them in the field.

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Body weights of some Ecuadorean birds

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Thomas (1990) has recently outlined the value of avian body weight data in supplementing the wealth of information held in specimen collections. The present paper details 735 weights for 88 species derived from live trappings of birds caught for ringing at two sites in southern Ecuador:

(1) Rio Mazan Valley, Azuay Province (2°52'S, 79°7'W). Trapping was undertaken in high-altitude (3050–3350 m) primary and secondary forest, and adjacent early successional grassland, in July–September, 1986 and 1987. Details of the site and procedures are given in King (1989).

(2) Bosque Domono, Macas, Morona-Santiago Province (2°7'S, 78°8'W). Bosque Domono (1100 m a.s.l.) lies some 20 km due north of the town of Macas, in the extreme south-east corner of Sangay National Park, on the eastern slope of the Andean Cordillera. The area consists entirely of regenerated subtropical forest. Mist-netting took place on nine dates, 24–27 July and 21–25 August 1987.

Weights were taken using 50 g and 300 g Pesola balances, and are given to the nearest 0.1 g for birds under 30 g, otherwise to the nearest 1 g. Trapping periods covered dawn to dusk more or less evenly; thus, any